

Message Text

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43

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 AID-20 IO-14 /150 W

----- 114220

R 190917Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7768

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTAIEWYR

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE KUALA LUMPUR 3991

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, MY

SUBJ: AGUNG TO TAKE SECOND WIFE

1. RELIABLE PRESS SOURCES CONFIRM RUMORS THAT THE KING, KNOWN IN MALAY AS THE YANG DI-PERTUAN AGUNG, PLANS TO MARRY AN ATTRACTIVE MALAY COMMONER, ZUBAIDAH BUNYAMIN. ACCORDING TO ASSOCIATED PRESS CORRESPONDENT HERE TUN RAZAK HAS ALREADY AGREED TO A SEPT 4 WEDDING BUT AN OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT IS BEING DELAYED UNTIL AFTER AUGUST 24 ELECTIONS. CIK BUNYAMIN, A 19 YEAR OLD SECRETARIAL STUDENT, APPARENTLY ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF THE AGUNG WHEN SHE WON A LOCAL BEAUTY CONTEST. THE AGUNG, 47, ACCEDED TO THE SULTANATE OF KEDAH IN 1958 UPON THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER. HE WAS ELECTED FIFTH AGUNG BY THE CONFERENCE OF RULERS IN JULY 1970, TOOK OFFICE IN SEPTEMBER 1970, AND WILL FINISH HIS FIVE YEAR TERM IN SEPTEMBER 1975. HE MARRIED THE PRESENT QUEEN, A PRINCESS OF NEGRI SEMBILAN AND DAUGHTER OF THE FIRST AGUNG IN 1956. THEY HAVE ONE DAUGHTER,

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ABOUT SIX YEARS OLD.

2. COMMENT: ISLAMIC LAW PERMITS MUSLIMS TO HAVE UP TO FOUR WIVES, THEREFORE THE KING'S ACTION IS IN KEEPING WITH THE NATIONAL RELIGION. NON-MALAYS MAY FEEL, HOWEVER, THAT THE MARRIAGE TARNISHES THE IMAGE OF THE FIRST OF THE AGUNGS TO BE GENERALLY ACCEPTED BY CHINESE AND INDIANS BECAUSE OF HIS INTELLIGENCE AND DECENCY. (THE EXISTENCE OF A KING WAS CHALLENGED BY OPPOSITION PARTIES IN THE ILL-FATED 1969 ELECTIONS.) ON THE OTHER HAND, THE NEED FOR A MALE HEIR TO THE THRONE OF KEDAH IS LIKELY TO BE CITED AS THE REASON FOR THE MARRIAGE AND THE QUEEN IS REPORTED TO HAVE GIVEN HER AGREEMENT, THEREFORE IT IS NOT LIKELY TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL IMPACT.

UNDERHILL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MOSLEMS, LAW, MARRIAGES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 AUG 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: boyleja
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974KUALA03991
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740227-0880
From: KUALA LUMPUR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740837/aaaabfoc.tel
Line Count: 75
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: boyleja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 JUN 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <03 MAR 2003 by boyleja>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AGUNG TO TAKE SECOND WIFE
TAGS: PINT, MY, (AGUNG, YANG D P), (BUNYAMIN, ZUBAIDAH)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005